

## CHARACTER OF MILL AVENUE DISTRICT

Part of the charm of Mill Avenue District is its historic architecture and authenticity. Interestingly, many architects have located their practices in this creative and inspiring environment. One of these firms and its principal is Stu Siefer of Siefer Associates Architects, a presence in Mill Avenue District for almost 34 years, and a landowner as well (Tempe Hardware Building; Tempe National Bank Building).

Though he has been involved with more than 250 projects in downtown Tempe, ranging from the nostalgic Bandersnatch to the new University Towers, he claims now to be "winding down" his practice. But, Stu has a new adventure in "JAMN\_AZ" that is bringing summertime vibrancy to this hot town with a summer jazz series line-up every Monday evening at 5:30 at Monti's Back Door. Stu's cool...and definitely part of the Mill Avenue District vibe.

**PROFILE:** Stu Siefer, Architect and tenor saxophonist

**TITLE/ORGANIZATION:** Siefer Associates Architects, JAM'N, Principal

**LENGTH OF TIME ASSOCIATED WITH MILL AVENUE DISTRICT:** 33+ year

**EDUCATION:** B.A. Liberal Arts, Wayne State University in Detroit; Bachelor of Architecture, Arizona State University

**MAJOR CHALLENGE IN YOUR BUSINESS:** Definitely, studying current styles and trends in architecture and keeping up with changing technology.

**MENTORS/OTHERS ADMIRERED:** Certainly I've been influenced by some of my professors in the School of Architecture. But I am continuously inspired by Mill Avenue District and its authenticity. Mill Avenue District has been my most important mentor.

**LITTLE KNOWN FACT:** My first degree was in Psychology (analyze that!); more recently I completed my first triathlon in the summer of 2006.

**HOBBIES/AVOCATIONS:** Running, swimming, biking, hiking, skiing...also love that jazz thing, which helped pay my way through school.

Q. How have you been involved to advance the goals of Mill Avenue District?

A. In the early 70s, I was involved with the Project Area Committee, an advisory group to the Council under former Mayor LoPiano. In those days we emphasized historic preservation, saving the Andre, Vienna Bakery and Petersen buildings. More recently, I have helped contribute to design standards for development and redevelopment projects. I was a founding member of Downtown Tempe Community (continuing to serve on the Board) and also am President of the Historical Preservation Commission.

Q. What story or aspect about Mill Avenue District is a favorite of yours?

A. Years ago my son was sick and I went to Campus Corner (which was new at the time) to purchase some cold medicine for him. Since the store was out of the medicine, the proprietor insisted on going over to his other location (on

College) to personally pick some up for me, which took him about 10 minutes round trip. When he returned, I was embarrassed that I had no cash to pay him. But this proprietor trusted me to come back later to pay. This was the kind of downtown business community we had; one based on trust and a shared sense of community.

- Q. If you ruled the world, what would you change in Mill Avenue District?
- A. I'd like to see Mill Avenue District become the retail destination for unique, independent retail businesses. I think this would be a huge attraction for shoppers and residents alike and contribute to the sustainability of our downtown economy.
- Q. What is your vision for the future of Mill Avenue District?
- A. Any "District" or "neighborhood" depends on the willingness of its people to passionately deal with whatever issues it faces. Mill Avenue District must become the "anti-Mall," populated by people who live here and work here, who truly care about each other and this special place.
- Q. Is there a particular personal success of which you are most proud?
- A. Working with the State Historic Preservation Office, and uncovering an agreement the City had made with the Federal Government to pursue "reasonable efforts" to save historic buildings, helped us to save the Andre Building (presently occupied by Rula Bula) in Mill Avenue District, which was already slated for redevelopment. It was a battle...but I'm proud to look at that building today and know I had a hand in saving it from the wrecking ball.
- Q. What makes Stu Siefer a part of Mill Avenue District's "character?"
- A. Stu declined to comment. But a "pal" around town told me that in his quiet and persistent way, Stu Siefer is literally part of Mill Avenue District's DNA. He has had a hand in preserving and restoring her, in designing new space here, in providing guidelines for others who build here, and in caring about and contributing to what "happens" here, whether it's entertainment or relationships or the retail experience. He shows up...and he makes a positive contribution. Very cool!